Reprint 1908

A Workman's Straight Talk to a Railway Company.

GREAT EASTERN RAILWAY,
OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT,
LIVERPOOL STREET STATION,
LONDON, *June 12th*, 1895.

SIR,—

It is reported to me that on the 11th inst. you were found at Stepney travelling in a second-class carriage, holding a third-class ticket from Fenchurch Street to Stratford Market. Before taking further action in the matter, I am prepared to receive any explanation you may have to offer.

I am,
Your obedient servant,
J. H. NETTLESHIP.
Superintendent.

Mr. E. Leggatt,
23 Eve Road, West Ham.

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23 EVE ROAD,
WEST HAM, E.

SIR,—

In answer to your letter of the 12th inst., I offer the following explanation :—

1st—I am an Anarchist and refuse to recognise the right of a section of parasites calling themselves shareholders to make rules, regulations, and bye-laws, own railways and monopolise the results of the united labours of thousands of working men, and then dictate upon what terms they shall travel.

2nd—I only recognise *one* class, viz., the Working Class, who produce all the wealth of the world, and are therefore the only *Useful* class, and the only class entitled to ride. The others, viz., the politicians, law-makers, judges, the modern Solomons called "magistrates," retired soap-boilers, gamblers on the Stock Exchange, middlemen, commission agents, exploiters, aldermen, sky-pilots, bishops, and the host of parasites who do not work, but live in luxury and idleness on the misery and destitution of my class, should be compelled to walk.

3rd—I always ride first or second class, not because I wish to mix with the *respectable* or ruling classes, but because, as a worker, I want comfort, and prefer stuffed cushions to deal boards.

4th—It is quite true that a labelled slave, uniformed and numbered, called an Inspector, asked me why I rode second class. I told him because the third-class "cattle-truck" did not suit me; that I object to stand fifteen in one compartment as the workers do morning and night; and owing to the fact that I am a "common" dock labourer with a wife and three children, and only having received 9s. in wages during the past three weeks, I am unable to pay more. Besides, I refuse to be relegated to a third class, or receive a third-class ticket without a protest. I belong to the HIGHEST CLASS in the land, the WORKING CLASS, the class who keep the loafing class—the lawyers, shareholders, bankers, merchants, judges, policemen, warders, and the host of others who neither toil nor spin.

5th—I do this on principle; not with any mean or paltry motive, like the "masher" in the same carriage, who said, in answer to your Inspector, that he got in while the train was moving, which was a lie; he was in before me, and the train did not move until I had got in, and I had a baby in arms to carry.

6th—When your company think proper to give better accommodation in the shape of cushions, etc., like the L.T. & S.R., G.W.R., and M.R., I shall be glad to use them in order to get away from the pious, goody-goody, would-be aristocrats on £2 a week (or less) who grace the carriages with their presence to keep away from the "mob" who are fools enough to ride third class. Although they profess to believe we shall all meet together somewhere beyond the moon when we are dead, they say "For God's sake keep apart on earth."

7th—Whatever may be the result of your "further action" I know not, neither do I care. You may put this letter on the Chart or Railway Map if you like, or hand it to the legal representative of the company or any other "honest lawyer," who will, of course, fall back on that monstrosity called law, which is upheld by FORCE and FRAUD; but whatever you do, I shall still resist oppression and ride in comfort, whether you call it 2nd or 200th class.

As I had no voice in the formation of your rules, bye-laws, etc., but am compelled to accept the conditions laid down by those people who receive the "rent of ability" in the shape of rent, profit, and interest, who perform no useful function for the community, but who exist on FRAUD AND ROBBERY, like Lord Hamilton, I refuse to obey them.

Lastly—Neither imprisonment, nor the fear of imprisonment, will make me alter my views. I recognise the class war between workers and shirkers, and shall demand comfort whenever possible for the class to which I belong; and if that be a crime, I shall be proud to be a "criminal."

He who would be free, himself must strike the blow.

Long live Anarchy and to Hell with Government!

EDWARD LEGGATT.